(b) The total quantity of fruits, vegetables and other food items exported is not significant compared to the total production of *thesi* items. Hence, it is generally unlikely to have any adverse impact on the domestic market. However, exports will help in maximising farm income and earn foreign exchange for the country.

Import of Recyclable Plastics

1839. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are importing recyclable plastic every month from Europe despite proposed ban on use of carry bags;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the progress on finding a biodegradable substitute for plastic carry bags?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) The import of plastic waste and scrap is being regulated in accordance with the Public Notice No. 392-PN/92-97 dated 1st January, 1997, issued by Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, which lays down detailed safeguards and ensures that no toxic/hazardous material is imported. The Ministry of Environment & Forests has issued the Recycled Plastics Manufacture and Usage Rules, 1999. These rules prohibit use of carry bags and containers made of recycled plastics for storing, carrying, dispensing or packaging of food stuffs and do not impose a blanket ban on the manufacture and use of plastic carry bags in the country. Environment friendly materials such as biodegradable plastics are at various states of research and development in the country. The technology for the manufacture of biodegradable plastics is not yet fully commercialised in the country.

Multinational and foreign companies operationg in India

1840. SHRI V. N. GADGIL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of multinational and foreign companies operating in India; and

(b) how many of them are producing or manufacturing consumer goods?